

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5362

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: MR 2 WEEKLY OVERVIEW, MARCH 25- APRIL 1

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SAIGON FROM NHA TRANG APR 1
REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO

QUOTE NHA TRANG 352

1. THE MAJOR EVENT OF THE WEEK WAS THE PASSAGE OF X- PLUS-60, AN OCCASION ON WHICH WE COMMENTED AT LENGTH IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE, AND WITH IT THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE LAST VESTIGE OF US MILITARY PRESENCE IN MR II, THE US ELEMENTS OF THE FPJMC IN TRUCE REGIONS III AND IV. A FEW LOW- KEY OFFICIAL CEREMONIES COMMEMORATED THE DEPARTURES, BUT OTHERWISE THERE WAS LITTLE VIETNAMESE REACTION, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE.

2. MILITARILY, IT WAS THE FOURTH CONSECUTIVE WEEK OF RELATIVE QUIET. THE NORTHERN DISTRICTS OF BINH DINH PROVINCE WERE THE ONLY AREA TO EXPERIENCE CONSISTANT ACTIVITY, WITH FREQUENT ENEMY ABF AND GROUND ATTACKS ON ARVN AND TERRITORIAL- FORCE POSITIONS. THE FREQUENCY OF CONTACT AND OF ENEMY SHELLINGS DROPPED OFF IN WESTERN PLEIKU. RF UNITS WERE HARD HIT IN PHU YEN AND BINH THUAN, AS WELL AS IN BINH DINH; THE CASUALTY FIGURES SUGGESTED THAT FRIENDLY UNITS WERE NOT WELL PREPARED. CAM RANH CITY HAD ITS FIRST INCIDENT INVOLVING CASUALTIES TO EITHER SIDE SINCE FEB 4; IN
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THIS CASE AN ENEMY UNIT OF UNKNOWN SIZE TRIGGERED A MECHANICAL AMBUSH AND LOST THREE KIA. LESSER INCIDENTS OF ENEMY HARASSMENT, TERRORISM AND PROPAGANDIZING WERE REPORTED FROM KHANH HOA, LAM DONG AND QUANG DUC.

3. WE DO NOT HAVE AN ADEQUATE PICTURE OF ALL GVN GROUND OPERATIONS. SOME ARE KNOWN TO BE IN PROGRESS IN NORTHERN BINH DINH TO PROVIDE SECURITY FOR RESUMPTION OF THE TEMPORARILY- SUSPENDED RETURN- TO- VILLAGE PROGRAM, AND IT IS LIKELY THAT SOME OF THE CONTACTS REPORTED IN THAT AREA RESULT FROM FRIENDLY INITIATIVE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE TAM QUAN (BINH DINH) DISTRICT CHIEF COMPLAINED DURING THE WEEK THAT THE ARVN 47 TH REGIMENT HAD CEASED OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS AND WAS HARASSING RETURNING REFUGEES AND OTHER CIVILIANS.

4. THE SAME SORT OF CONTRADICTIONARY TENDENCIES IN GVN BEHAVIOR MENTIONED LAST WEEK RECURRED. THE BINH THUAN PROVINCE CHIEF, PROVOKED BY NUMEROUS ENEMY- INITIATED INCIDENTS, PROCLAIMED HIS INTENTION TO REACT WITH ANY MEASURES AT HIS COMMAND TO FUTURE HARASSMENTS. IN CONTRAST, THE 23 RD DIVISION COMMANDER RESPONDED TO FEELERS FROM THE NVA 95 B REGIMENT BY SENDING AN UNARMED FIVE- MAN NEGOTIATING TEAM INTO ENEMY TERRITORY TO DISCUSS A MUTUAL PULL- BACK FROM ROUTE 14 IN THE CHU PAO PASS AREA OF KONTUM. (THE LAST SUCH CONVERSATIONS ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE FEB 17, THE SAME DAY THE GVN ATTEMPTED TO OPEN THE ROAD BY SENDING UP A LARGE CONVOY FROM PLEIKU, WHICH TOOK CONSIDERABLE LOSSES. THIS WEEK' S EXCHANGE WAS INCONCLUSIVE, LIKE THE CONVERSATIONS RESUMED NORTH OF KONTUM CITY TWO WEEKS AGO, BUT THE MEETINGS WILL EVIDENTLY CONTINUE.) MEANWHILE, THE MR IC COMMANDER COMPLETED HIS ROUNDS OF THE PROVINCES, EMPHASIZING CIVILIAN PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT.

5. THE PROVINCE CHIEFS OF PHU YEN AND PHU BON WERE REMOVED DURING THE WEEK ON CHARGES OF CORRUPTION. HOWEVER, BOTH MEN HAD BEEN IN THEIR JOBS FOR SOME TIME (34 AND 20 MONTHS, RESPECTIVELY), AND BOTH HAD WEATHERED EARLIER ACCUSATIONS OF CORRUPTION. THE TIMING OF THEIR REMOVAL MAY THEREFORE HAVE HAD MORE TO DO WITH PRESIDENT THIEU' S VISIT TO THE US THAN WITH ANY CONCERTED ANTI- CORRUPTION EFFORT BY THE GVN. (NOT SURPRISINGLY, BOTH MEN ATTRIBUTE THEIR DOWNFALL TO PERSONAL AND POLITICAL ENEMIES.)

6. IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW THE GVN WILL STAFF ITS ELEMENTS OF THE TPJMC IN MR II. SOME OFFICERS NOW ASSIGNED TO THE FPJMC WILL MOVE TO THE TWO- PARTY COMMISSION, OTHERS HAVE BEEN TOLD THEY WILL NOT, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND SOME DO NOT YET KNOW. SEVERAL OF THE GVN TEAM LEADERS AND MEMBERS HAVE BEEN OF LOW CALIBER; THE ASSIGNMENT OF BETTER OFFICERS TO THE TPJMC WOULD BE A WELCOME SIGN.

7. CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ICCS IN TRUCE REGION III (PLEIKU) ROTATED BACK TO THE CANDEL FOR THE WEEK. WITH THE ROTATION CAME WORD OF NEW CANADIAN TACTICS THAT EMPHASIZE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO VIOLATIONS, PROMPT AND UNCOMPROMISING REPORTS, AND FIRM ASSIGNMENTS OF BLAME. IF OTHER DELEGATIONS REFUSE TO TRAVEL, THE CANADIANS ARE TO GO ALONE; IF UNANIMOUS FINDINGS ARE IMPOSSIBLE, THE CANADIANS WILL FILE MINORITY REPORTS. INDOELS THROUGHOUT TR III ARE AS USUAL FOLLOWING THE CANADIAN LEAD, HAVING FOUND DURING THEIR CHAIRMANSHIP THAT ASIAN EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE COMPROMISE CAN SELDOM OVERCOME EAST EUROPEAN INTRANSIGANCE.

8. THERE WERE SOME EARLY INDICATORS OF CANDEL SUCCESS IN TRYING TO GET THE ICCS MOVING IN ITS MONTH- OLD INVESTIGATIVE PHASE, BUT IT MUST REMAIN TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE POLES AND HUNGARIANS WILL DEVISE NEW TACTICS OF THEIR OWN THAT WOULD AGAIN REDUCE THE ORGANIZATION TO STALEMATE.

9. SOME CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE IN TRUCE REGION IV (PHAN THIET) SUGGESTS THAT THE CANDEL MAY BE TRYING SIMILAR TACTICS THERE, BUT WE DO NOT YET HAVE CONFIRMATION FROM THE REGIONAL LEVEL.

10. IN SUM, MR II REMAINS ALMOST UNNATURALLY QUIET. THE KEY QUESTION REMAINS, AS BEFORE, ENEMY INTENTIONS. SIGNED ENGLE
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